Mr. Whitehall's
SERMON
Before the
UNIVERSITY.

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A

SERMON

Concerning

Edification in FAITH *and* DISCIPLINE,

Preached before the

UNIVERSITY

OF

OXFORD.

SEPT. 1. 1689.

By ROB. WHITEHALL (ſometime of *Merto* Coll. now) Vice-Principal of St. *Mary Hall.*

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To the Reader.

WHat I shall say, by way of Preface, is in short,

That the Britanick Church, did never enslave her self to the Church of Rome, as perhaps, other Churches had done: and supposing she had, that the capital Enemies to, and persecutors of the Protestants, were the English Roman Catholicks themselves; who made the first separation from Rome, and gave the King the title of head of the Church: as we can prove from the Determinations of our Universities, the Statutes of our Parliaments, and the Decrees of our National Synods. So then the Papists themselves made the breach, we perfected the Reformation: They quarrelled with the State or Church of Rome, (or both) we reformed according to the word of God, proposing the primitive Church for our pattern.

Secondly, for the other Dissenters, I am to treat with in the following discourse. In the 28th. of Queen Eliz. (after Nonconformity, by Admonitions, Petitions, &c. had for some years strugled against the Church:) when some complained of the Liturgy to the Lord Treasurer Burleigh,

Burleigh, *and he demanded whither they desired the taking away thereof. They answered, No: but only the amendment of what was offensive therein. He required them to make a better, such as they would have settled in the stead thereof. Whereupon, The first Classis framed a new one somewhat according to the form of* Geneva.

The second Classis disliking it altered it in six hundred particulars.

The third quarelled at these Alterations, and resolved on a new modell.

The fourth Classis dissented from the former.

How were they baffled in the Hampton-Court *Conference? How disagreeable to reasonable and necessary Alterations, Corrections, and Amendments, is the Petition for Peace? I think it one of the safest wishes, a man can make in the Case: that our* Liturgy *receive no considerable alterations, till Dissenters themselves have agreed on such terms, upon which they will comply.*

A Sermon

A SERMON

Preached before the

Univerſity of *OXFORD*, &c.

I. Cor. ch. xiv. part of the 26th and the laſt Verſe.

--- Let all things be done to Edifying:
Let all things be done decently and in order.

Our Apoſtle in this Chapter, would have all thoſe Spiritual Gifts *gratis data*, which God has given to mankind, employ'd to the Benefit and Advantage of the Churches to which they belong, willing they be referred thereunto, as to their true and proper end. And having made a compariſon between two of them, Propheſie and Speaking with tongues, he admoniſheth *ver.* the 12*th.* that they ſeek in thoſe and in all other gifts, to *excell* one another *to the edifying of the Church*: and in all things relating meerly to the external polity of the Church, He commands the rules of decency and order to be obſerved: for God is not the Author of Confuſion.

By

By Edifying or Edification, (as it is tranſlated in the third verſe of this Chapter) a Metaphorical word, I conceive, is meant an improvement in any wiſe of our Spiritual condition, a building us up in Faith and Godlineſs: and by the command of decency and order, which I preſume do here relate to the externals of Religion, our Apoſtle requires the cuſtom of the Primitive Church, and of the Countrey to be obſerved, in matters of an indifferent nature, according to the diſcretion of Superiors. So that the ſence of theſe two Apoſtolical Canons will run thus.

Firſt, That Church Governours appoint nothing in the ſervice of God, but what is becoming, warrantable, and beneficial.

And, Secondly, that the people do readily and chearfully comply with, and ſubmit (to their determination, κατὰ τάξιν) according to their appointment.

In ſuch a Church then, where our underſtandings are beſt informed in the Fundamentals of Religion, and our minds are moſt influenced towards Piety and Devotion: in ſuch a Church, whoſe Order and Diſcipline is neither rude nor phantaſtical, ſlovenly nor ſuperſtitious; but decent and becoming, proper and uſefull, fit to inſtruct the reaſon, more than gratifie

gratifie the ſenſe, ready to engage the Will, more than raiſe the Affections; there certainly her Sons are continually made wiſer and better, and their Souls are moſt edifyed: and there alſo the Rules of Decency and Order are Religiouſly obſerved.

Without Decency and Order there can be no Edification, though the word edifie be of a larger import; and that is the reaſon I have joyned theſe two Rules together in the Text, as will appear by and by; for I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak of an Edifying and Unedifying Faith, as well as edifying and unedifying Rites and Ceremonies. Now an edifying Faith is ſuch as is agreeable to Scripture; and edifying Rites and Ceremonies are ſuch as are not diſagreeable to decency and order. When therefore there is a notorious failure in the one, and unjuſt impoſition of the other, I conceive, a ſeparation is lawful and warranted, as from other places, ſo eſpecially from the rules of the Text.

In the following diſcourſe, ſeeing Chriſt has left his Church militant in the power of Men to be directed and governed by them, for her Edification; who though they cannot make or aboliſh an Article of Faith, or enjoin any thing unlawful in the matter or manner of Worſhip

or Diſcipline, yet they often-times endeavour it, from whence of neceſſity follows a ſinful compliance, or a juſt ſeparation; and ſeeing the *Romaniſts* do object Hereſie and Schiſm to us, upon account, as they ſay, of our ſeparation from them, when we might have been edifyed in their Communion; and other Diſſenters make their puny exceptions, and by them would juſtifie their ſeparation from us: and we return the charge back again upon all our Adverſaries; eſpecially ſuch as ever were, or ought to have been of our Communion; and are able, (as we think) to defend our ſelves by the Rules of the Text.

I ſhall conſider in the firſt place wherein Hereſie and Schiſm do conſiſt, and wherein they do not, though a ſeparation be made: and having juſtifyed our ſeparation from the Church of *Rome,* upon that foundation, I ſhall prove that our diſſenting Brethren have no ſuch reaſon to ſeparate from our Communion. And becauſe, when the charge of Hereſie and Schiſm is wiped off from our ſelves, we have chiefly to deal with Proteſtant Diſſenters. I ſhall in the ſecond place endeavour to vindicate our *Liturgy* in point of ſome Rites and Ceremonies indecent, (as they ſay) diſorderly, and unedifying: and becauſe, when our diſſenting brethren, are

no

no longer able to maintain their particular exceptions, they cry out that a form of Prayer in general is empty, cold, dead, unedifying, and I know not how many ugly names beſides,

I ſhall endeavour to prove the contrary; and moreover,

That a form of Prayer is the moſt edifying, and is the only ſort of Prayer fit to be uſed in a publick Congregation. And from the whole, I believe, it will in ſome meaſure appear, to whom the names of Heretick and Schiſmatick do of right belong, and where the Rules of the Text be beſt obſerved.

In the firſt place then, I am to ſhew wherein the ſins of Hereſie and Schiſm do conſiſt, and when we are not chargeable with them, though a ſeparation be made: and when I have juſtifyed our ſeparation (allowing it to be ſuch, if it will do them any kindneſs) from the Church of *Rome*, upon that foundation, to prove that our diſſenting brethren have no ſuch cauſe to forſake our Communion.

So ſoon as men began to encreaſe and multiply upon the Earth, it became matter of mutual conſideration, to ſet Land-marks to their Territories, that there might be no contention amongſt them: and it has been the polity of all Nations to conſtitute Judges who might decide

differences; and to Enact Laws, whereby the diſobedient might receive puniſhments commenſurate to their offences, that thereby an end might be put to all diviſions in bodies politick: and certainly God and good Men will take as much care of the Church, as even Nature it ſelf prompts all Men to do of the State. Now, becauſe it is impoſſible, but (whil'ſt there are Men in the world) ſome will have as little regard to the Church, as others have to the good of the State: God, who is a God of Unity and Order, having given us a moſt perfect Religion, by our Saviour, hath ſince the times of Chriſtianity, left it to all Nations by the Governours of particular Churches, to explain our moſt holy Faith in points of difficulty; and to ordain Rules in indifferent things to be uſed in the worſhip of Himſelf, as ſhall ſeem beſt unto them for the decent and orderly behaviour, and the Edification of the ſaid Churches: and hath given them power to puniſh the perverſity of ſuch, who, through Ambition, Partiality, Intereſt, or unjuſt Prejudice, do by a cauſeleſs ſeparation, make diviſions in the ſame. And that we may paſs by nothing any way capable of exception, this Power of the Church is grounded upon Scripture and Reaſon; and alſo confirm'd by the concurrent

rent teſtimony of all Proteſtant Churches.

To continue the ſtate Argument, whoſe Governours are preſum'd the beſt Judges of the well-being of a Society; and the beſt Commentators upon the Law of Nature, who, if they miſtake in the explanation, or eſtabliſh any thing unjuſtly, have authority notwithſtanding to puniſh Sedition, Faction and Rebellion. So and much more ſo, although National Synods, nay, Councils themſelves, both may, and have erred, not only in their living and manner of Ceremonies, but alſo in matters of Faith: yet ſeeing the Scriptures cannot ſpeak of themſelves, private Men muſt depend upon the Church they are Members of, till they ſee juſt and lawful reaſons for a ſeparation, upon the one account or the other. For as a right faith and the internal unity of the Spirit is to be endeavoured after, to preſent us blameleſs before God; ſo external uniformity in words and actions is earneſtly to be contended for, in all believing Congregations. *See Art.* xix. *and Art.* xxi.

We come now therefore to conſider, when a ſeparation is lawful and when unlawful, and wherein the ſins of Hereſie and Schiſm do conſiſt.

Now an unlawful ſeparation is, firſt, When any man or number of men do voluntarily ſeparate

parate themſelves from a Chriſtian Church, allowing, requiring, and maintaining all the Doctrines of Chriſtian belief, and nothing more. He therefore that broacheth or embraceth, and with obſtinacy defendeth any thing for an Article of Faith, not believed by the Catholick Church, or denyeth what is believed by the Catholick Church, is guilty of Hereſie; Or ſecondly,

He, who out of fancy, pride, diſcontent, a proſpect of gain, or a falſe perſwaſion, ſeparates from a Church, form'd under lawful Governors, and govern'd by ſuch Laws as are not diſagreeable to the Laws of the Catholick Church, in matters of Decency and Order, though he cry up Purity and Edification never ſo much, has no ſufficient motive to, or plea for this ſeparation, and is really guilty of Schiſm.

It is true then, that to ſeparate from a Church, adding to, or diminiſhing from the Articles of neceſſary belief, is not Hereſie: nor is it Schiſm to ſeparate from a Church, though eſtabliſhed under lawful Governors, if ſhe make ſuch the terms of her Communion, as cannot be conſented to, and uſed without ſin, any more than it is to be imputed a crime, to ſeparate from a number of Men, loſt, as to their own Fortunes, and banded into a faction

to

to ſubvert the wholeſome Laws, and deſtroy the Government of a Nation. But the formal reaſon of Hereſie and Schiſm conſiſts in obſtinately oppoſing the Church of Chriſt, or any particular Church, acting conformably thereto; the one in matters of Faith, the other in matters of Diſcipline and Order; and making a ſeparation thereupon. I preſume theſe Definitions are eaſie and Authentick, and therefore need no farther proof or illuſtration. To proceed then,

The Superſtitions and Corruptions of the Church of *Rome*, both in Doctrine and Diſcipline, enforced the neceſſity of a Reformation, if we would preſs on to Edification; and there being no hopes the Church of *Rome* would reform her ſelf, from theſe groſs Errors and Impoſitions; every particular National Church, having power to reform it ſelf, made our ſeparation lawful; *for what fellowſhip hath Righteouſneſs with Unrighteouſneſs? And what communion hath light and darkneſs? And what agreement hath the Temple of God with Idols?* And no body can think, we accuſe that Church unjuſtly, who will be at the pains to look into her Councils, Catechiſms and Maſs-books. Nay, the Papiſts themſelves cannot gain-ſay this power of a particular Church, provided

2 *Cor.* 6. 14, 16.

provided we can make good our charge.

I heartily wiſh our diſſenting brethren would not ſeparate from us, but upon ſuch reaſons as theſe, which never were, and I truſt in God, never will be given them.

Thoſe who pleaſe to obſerve, that our Holy Mother the Church of *England*, has retained nothing as an Article of Faith, but what is undeniably commanded to be believed in the word of God; after the manner it was explain'd in the firſt and pureſt Ages of Chriſtianity: and that, for that very reaſon, becauſe it was unedifying, the ſervice of the Church was, upon the Reformation, ordered to be us'd no longer in a Language not underſtood by the People, (oft-times not by the Prieſt himſelf) that many vain Prayers, and fruitleſs repetitions, were left out, and ſundry indecent Ceremonies, and many burthenſome ones were omitted: and who ſhall conſider that, in the ſtead thereof, we enjoy a Form of Common-Prayers, underſtood by all the People in the Kingdom, that do but underſtand their Mother tongue: and theſe Prayers, compos'd of ſuch ſound words, as are expreſſive of the glory of God, and of the ſins and neceſſities of our ſelves, and of all mankind: for this excellent matter is taken out of the word of God himſelf, or Primitive

ee Art. X.

mitive Liturgies for the moſt part; and digeſted into ſuch a method as is every way uſeful: and laſtly, that thoſe geſtures and Ceremonies enjoin'd in the uſe of it, are grave and ſober, decent and orderly, muſt needs conclude, that we endeavour to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: that our Faith and our Ceremonies remain unblameable, and are eſtabliſh't much for the betterment of our Spiritual condition.

See the Preface before the Common-Payer-Book, of Ceremonies.

The reaſons at firſt, why ſome Ceremonies were aboliſhed, and ſome retained, were, "Some were put away, becauſe the great exceſs "and multitude of them was ſo encreaſed, that "the burthen of them became intollerable: "And, beſides this, Chriſt's Goſpel is not a ce"remonial Law, but it is a Religion to ſerve "God, not in the bondage of the Figure or ſha"dow, but in the freedom of the Spirit; be"ing content onely with thoſe Ceremonies, "which do ſerve to a decent order, and godly "Diſcipline, and ſuch as be apt to ſtir up the "dull mind of Man to the remembrance of his "duty to God, by ſome notable and ſpecial "ſignification, whereby he might be edifyed. And the reaſons, why ſome were retain'd, were, becauſe, "without ceremonies it was "not poſſible to keep any Order or quiet Diſci-

"pline in the Church: and if ſome be lawful, "rather the old, (where they may be well us'd) "than any deviſed anew; for in ſuch a caſe, "we ought rather to reverence them for their "Antiquity. Furthermore, there is no juſt "cauſe to be offended with the ceremonies re-"tained, both, becauſe they were retained "for Diſcipline and Order, and are neither "dark nor dumb, but are ſo ſet forth, that e-"very man may underſtand what they mean, "and to what uſe they ſerve. And all this was done by our firſt Reformers, without condemning the practiſe of other Nations, "in "uſing ſuch Ceremonies, as they ſhall think "beſt to the ſetting forth God's Honour and "Glory; and reducing the people to the moſt "Godly way of living, without Error and Su-"perſtition.

See the firſt Preface.

And in the review of the Common-Prayer-Book, after our late unhappy confuſions, the Reverend Perſons therein concern'd, "endea-"voured to obſerve the like moderation, as "they found to have been uſed in like caſes in "former times, rejecting, of the alterations "propoſed, onely ſuch as were of dangerous "conſequence, or no conſequence at all: and "rather, out of a deſire of peace and unity, "than enforced ſo to do by any ſtrength of Ar-"gument,

"gument, willingly aſſented to ſuch as ſeem'd,
"in any degree requiſite and expedient.

And it may truly be ſaid, ſtill to have been the wiſdom of the Church of *England*, to keep "the mean between the two extreams, of too "much eaſineſs in admitting, and of too much "ſtiffneſs in refuſing any variation: for as on "the one ſide particular Forms of Divine Wor-"ſhip, and the Rites and Ceremonies appoint-"ed to be uſed therein, are acknowledged to "be in their own nature indifferent, and there-"fore alterable upon important conſiderations, "according to the exigency of times and occa-"ſions: ſo on the other ſide, common expe-"rience teacheth, that where a change has been "made of things adviſedly eſtabliſhed, (no evi-"dent neceſſity ſo requiring) ſundry inconve-"niencies have thereupon enſued; and thoſe "many times more and greater than the evils "intended to be remedied by ſuch a change.

This I have taken out of the Prefaces to the Common-Prayer, moſtly in the ſame words, that I might be ſure to give the true reaſons, why ſome Ceremonies were aboliſhed, and others retained; and upon what motives, ſince the Compiling the *Liturgy*, any alterations have been made therein: and this the rather, becauſe Diſſenters repreſent our Reformers as

more moderate Men, as they are pleas'd to diſtinguiſh between them and their Succeſſors.

Let it be conſidered, in the laſt place, as another ſubſtantial Reaſon, that we had the Papiſts to deal with, who continued in our Communion, in ſome meaſure at leaſt, for a pretty while after the Reformation: and it would have been matter of great and juſt offence to them, to throw off all things at pleaſure, making no diſtinction between decent and indecent, edifying and unedifying, lawful and unlawful. If we had went farther, we might have humour'd for a time, but after, experience teacheth us, we ſhould not thereby have continued to ſatisfie ſome; when, on the other hand, we muſt needs have diſobliged more: if we had thrown off all things indifferently, we had come nearer to that novelty, which now is unjuſtly objected againſt us; but we had went farther from the pureſt Churches of Chriſt.

If that be allowed then which I have ſaid, I have ſhewn wherein Hereſie and Schiſm do conſiſt, and when we are not chargeable therewith, though a ſeparation be made: and upon this foundation I have juſtifyed our ſeparation from the Church of *Rome*. And, for ought we

we have yet ſeen, the Doctrine and Diſcipline of the Church of *England* is ſo Orthodox and Edifying, and ſhe has been ſo tender of her children moreover, that there has been no occaſion for our diſſenting Brethren, upon the pretence of greater Edification, (which pretence themſelves will never allow) or any other pretence whatever, to ſeparate from her Communion.

Now, becauſe our diſſenting Brethren ſeparate from us chiefly, (as they ſay) upon account of Church Government, or elſe, upon account of our particular form of Diſcipline, and the Rites and Ceremonies therein uſed; (The Government under which we live, being of reverend Antiquity in the Church, and from time to time continued and confirm'd by the Laws and great Charters of this Kingdom, and (as I hope) always able to maintain it ſelf by the ſaid Laws) I ſhall make it the buſineſs of my remaining diſcourſe, to vindicate our *Liturgy* in point of ſome Rites and Ceremonies: and becauſe, when they are no longer able to maintain their particular exceptions, (what to me is a ſtrong Argument they reſolve never to be reconciled) they cry out, that a form of Prayer in general, ſtints the Spirit of the gifted Man, is cold, dead, and I know not

not what beſides; I ſhall endeavour to prove the contrary, and moreover, that a form of Prayer is the moſt Edifying, and the onely ſort of Prayer fit to be us'd in a publick Congregation.

Some things there are in Civil Government indifferent in their own nature; which with reſpect to circumſtances become expedient or inexpedient, lawful or unlawful; and therefore are, at the diſcretion of the Civil Government, to be commanded or forbidden, eſtabliſhed or aboliſhed: (remaining ſtill indifferent in their own natures.) So in ſacred matters, "the Governours of the Church (who alſo have "Authority in controverſies of Faith) have "power to decree Rites and Ceremonies, and to enjoyn indifferent things in the ſervice of God, ſo that the Rules of the Text be obſerved: and when they be thus enjoyn'd, they ceaſe to be indifferent in their uſe; for, (as was ſaid before) it is impoſſible, without ſome Ceremonies, to keep any quiet Order or Diſcipline in the Church: "and the appointment of "theſe cannot pertain to private Men, therefore "no Man ought to preſume to appoint or alter "any common order in Chriſt's Church, ex- "cept he be lawfully called and Authorized "thereunto. And although the keeping or "omitting

ee Art. xx.

ee the aſt pref. f Cere- nonies.

"omitting of a Ceremony, in it ſelf conſider'd, "be but a ſmall thing; yet the willfull and "contemptuous tranſgreſſion, and breaking of "a common Order and Diſcipline, is no ſmall "offence before God. Wherefore, after ſuch an eſtabliſhment, private perſons ought to ſuſpect their own judgements, and by all means poſſible to inform themſelves; nay, in ſeveral things, which ſeem not ſo expedient, as they could wiſh, to comply however, rather then break or diſturb the peace and order of the Church.

We have allready ſpoken to the Language and matter of the *Liturgy*: and no devout perſon of the Church of *England*, but can teſtifie he hath been edifyed in the uſe of it. Nay, the moſt malitious of our Enemies, dare not openly accuſe it of ſinfulneſs. I never met with more than one, who had forehead enough to bring this railing Accuſation.

Let us now conſider the geſtures enjoyned; whether they are not very decent, and becoming that part of Devotion we are about. Our Confeſſions are made with unfeigned ſorrow, and our Petitions with humility, and in Faith upon our knees; this being the poſture beſt becoming Supplicants to the Throne of Grace: Our Creeds are repeated ſtanding, in token of our

our readineſs to defend them; and our Praiſes are made ſtanding and magnifying the Eternal God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt. Our geſtures are not much found fault with, except kneeling at the Lord's Supper: now the Scriptures in this matter leave us ſomewhat in the dark; as to the geſture uſed by our bleſſed Saviour in the Inſtitution thereof; and there being no poſitive command in Scripture, to determine our practice; the Laws of every particular Church muſt be a guide to her own Children: and they ought to be the more readily complyed with, when they are not diſagreeable to the practice of the primitive Church; and when, according to the cuſtom of the Country, they are ſuitable to the action we are then performing: and this is our caſe, kneeling in *England* being accounted the moſt humble and devout poſture. Beſides, for ſitting, which our *Non-Conformiſts* ſo much contend for, as the moſt proper for the Holy Communion; Mr. *Aſhwell* informs us, that it was ſo far from being appropriated thereto of old, "That upon "his beſt ſearch, he could not find it uſed at all "in Divine Service, except at the reading of the "Leſſons and the hearing of the Sermon.

Geſt. Euch. p. 9.

And if they object that this geſture has been egregiouſly abuſed by *Papiſts*, to Idolatrous ends

ends and purpoſes; let it ſuffice to ſay, that no ſuch Idolatry can be intended by the Church of *England*: For, leſt the ſaid kneeling ſhould by any perſons, "either out of ignorance or in- *See after Communion.*
"firmity, or out of malice and obſtinacy be "miſconſtrued and depraved; She declares, that "no Adoration is thereby intended, or ought "to be done to the Sacramental Bread and Wine, "or to any Corporal preſence of Chriſt's natu- "ral Fleſh and Blood: but that this order is "well meant, for a ſignification of our humble "and grateful acknowledgement of the benefits "of Chriſt therein given to all worthy receiv- "ers, and for the avoiding of any ſuch pro- "phanation and diſorder as might otherwiſe "enſue.

To argue the unlawfulneſs or irregularity of any thing, only becauſe it is uſed in a corrupt Church, is the way, not only to be no Church, but at this rate we muſt neither eat nor drink, nor ſee the Sun, becauſe Jews and Pagans enjoy thoſe bleſſings as well as Chriſtians.

In like manner for removing all ſuch ſcruples, as might any ways trouble the conſcience of thoſe who are indeed rightly Religious, following the practice of the primitive Church; our Church has explain'd the lawful uſe of the

e Can. *xxx.*

Croſs in Baptiſm; and he is like to make none of the moſt faithful Souldiers, nor fight the moſt manfully under Chriſt's Banner, who deſpiſes that honourable badge, whereby we are dedicated to the ſervice of him that dyed upon the Croſs.

For the Surplice, we are not required to believe, that there is any inherent ſanctity in it, or any other Veſtment; but publick perſons eſpecially have always been diſtinguiſhed by their habits; and it being prov'd that all things are not to be laid aſide by reaſon they have been abuſed; and alſo becauſe more offence would be given by leaving off what might decently be retained, it is undeniably lawful to oblige the wearing it, as well as any thing elſe, without conſidering the Antiquity, or the ſignificative Innocency thereof. And for all Miniſters to wear the ſame is very agreeable to decency and order; ſo that he muſt have a farther and a worſe deſign than appears, who pretends to ſcruple it.

To ſee the moderation, with which our Church did proceed, ſhe caſt off all Ceremonies that were either of late invention, or might reaſonably give offence. Inſtead of about fifteen Ceremonies required by the Church of *Rome*, our Church has retained kneeling only in the Sacrament

Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And inſtead of a multitude of Rites in Baptiſm, ſhe has reſerved nothing but the ſign of the Croſs, and that not uſed ſo, as in the Church of *Rome*: and what ſhe means in the uſe of both, ſhe has carefully declared.

I have not time to anſwer particular exceptions againſt words, and phraſes in our *Liturgy*. So I come to what our *Non-Conformiſts* hurry me, when they have ſpent their breath to no purpoſe, in quarrelling with Rites and Ceremonies: and that is,

To anſwer their complaint, that a form of Prayer in general ſtints the Spirit of the gifted man; and that ours are but empty, dead, unedifying forms. As to ſtinting the Spirit of the gifted man; this would be an accidental perfection rather than a fault: the miraculous gift of Praying was extraordinary and temporary; for thereby God aſſiſted the primitive Chriſtians, as alſo by other miracles for the converting people to Chriſtianity, and for the confirmation of the Goſpel. But now this is done, we find no promiſe, nor ſee any neceſſity for the continuance of ſo miraculous a Gift: and ſome people's Prayers, who pretend moſt to it, are much rather a certain ſign and teſtimony, that it does not now remain amongſt us.

If I ſhould anſwer what few of them have ingenuity enough to underſtand by the queſtion, The gift of Prayer conſiſts not in the *Extempore* chiming an hundred good ſentences poſſibly without Piety or Devotion; but in a gracious and devout temper of Soul in him that prays in good earneſt; which muſt needs be moſt full and lively where you know the words beforehand: and ſo the holy Scripture teſtifies, when *the Spirit helpeth our infirmities and maketh interceſſions for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.* Rom. 8. 26.

To tell a great truth in pitty and compaſſion to thoſe who do not conſider it; they are beguiled by a ſenſible Devotion, which begins in the Animal part, and makes conſiderable alterations in the man; it draws ſighs from the boſome, and melts the Eyes into tears and tranſports with grateful impetuoſity; but as it had its foundation in the ſenſitive Nature, builds him up in ſelf-love and pride, and leaves him to admire the Fabrick, and contemn private Reaſon and Publick Authority.

When they call forms of Prayer cold, empty, dead, unedifying forms, they muſt mean (if they mean any thing) that they are dull and heavy, and not edifyed in the uſe of them: To this we need return no other Anſwer, but that

coldneſs

coldneſs and deadneſs of affection is a great fault, but then 'tis a fault of our own making; it is our own careleſſneſs, not the forms that are to be blamed for it; otherwiſe there is nothing in the world, not the holy Scriptures themſelves, but might be branded with the ſame: and indeed they go very near, if not beyond this ſin, who in their *Extempore* Prayers leave out the moſt abſolute form of Prayer, the Lord's Prayer it ſelf.

That our form of Prayer is not a leſs edifying than other forms, I ſuppoſe, I need not go about to prove. Thus much in general is evidently true; what the people know before-hand, they know beſt how to joyn in; and what they know beſt how to joyn in, all other things conſidered, muſt certainly be moſt for their Edification.

Laſtly, and to uſe but one Argument more, he, that will conſider that how learned, pious and careful ſoever ſome men may be, yet that others will not uſe the ſame Piety and Diſcretion, muſt acknowledge upon that motive, though it be none of the beſt; (for what is the Miniſters learning and goodneſs to the people, in this caſe, if they cannot joyn with him in this learned and good Prayer) that publick forms of Prayer are moſt accommodated to publick uſe, if he would have the people edifyed,

and

and God Almighty glorifyed; if he would have their Souls secured from being ſcandalized, and God Almighty's honour from being blaſphemed: and I fear we need not go to another Nation to prove this.

But to be ſhort, there is no ſort of Prayer, but is a form of Prayer to the people: for they are confin'd to the words of him that prays, without the leaſt liberty of variation: and conſequently, the *Extempore* Prayer of the greateſt pretender, and the conceived Prayer of the beſt man living, are ſubject, at leaſt, to the ſame inconveniencies, with the Common-Prayers, and to a great many others no doubt, which, if it were farther needful, I could eaſily make appear.

Thus are men put to their ſhifts, when they plead non-ſenſe: for how plainly does it appear, that both Premeditated and *Extempore* Prayers are alike forms to the people? And with him that prefers an *Extempore* to a Premeditated Prayer, I deſire to have no farther communication.

And thus have I, in the ſecond place, endeavoured to vindicate our holy Mother the Church of *England*, in ſome of her Rites and Ceremonies; and to anſwer ſome objections of our diſſenting Brethren; and to make it appear

that

that a form of Prayer is the only ſort of Prayer (I do not ſay which is fit, but) can be uſed in publick.

And at length we ſee to whom the names of Heretick and Schiſmatick do of right belong: to them moſt certainly, who, upon pretence of greater Edification, or any other pretence ſoever, do make an unlawful ſeparation from the Church.

The groſs errors and corruptions of the Church of *Rome*, both in Doctrine and Diſcipline, without hopes of a Reformation within her ſelf, made ours a lawful ſeparation; whilſt our diſſenting Brethren (as has been proved) have had no ſuch reaſon to forſake our Communion.

To conclude all, Chriſtianity in general will not ſecure a man from Hereſie or Schiſm; and to be a Proteſtant at large conſiſts of too many negatives to make a good Chriſtian: Holineſs and Conſcience, and Edification, are fine words, and ſo is peace and common honeſty, but practiced by few: for moſt men, out of weakneſs, or intereſt, or prejudice, eſpouſe falſe notions; and then cry them up for Purity, Edification, Reformation, and the like; though if examined to the bottom, they have not the leaſt ſhadow of reaſon, or ſpark of honeſty in them: But in any Reformation or alteration, the Rules of the

Text

Text are they, which Governours of Churches muſt go by. They ought to take care, as the Church of *England* always has done, (and, I pray God ſhe always may do) that all things be carried on decently and in order, and to the Edification of the people committed to her charge. And God, of his Infinite Mercy, grant, that we may be all edifyed, who are Members of a Church, where all things are done to Edifying; and that all thoſe, who are gone aſtray may return to our Communion.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed all Honour and Glory, both now and for ever. Amen.

FINIS.

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